

AMENDMENTS TO CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) An electronic shopping system, comprising:
 - a first network connection between a first merchant computer and a network host computer, said first connection for transmitting product information to said network host computer in accordance with a first type of network connectivity;
 - a second network connection between a second merchant computer and said network host computer, said second connection for transmitting product information to said network host computer in accordance with a second type of network connectivity;
 - a database at said network host computer for storing said product information from said first merchant computer and said second merchant computer;
 - a first computer program at said network host computer for assimilating said product information for display in one presentation distinguishing said product information from said first merchant computer from said product information from said second merchant computer; and
 - a third network connection between said network host computer and a customer computer, said third network connection for transmitting said assimilated product information from said network host computer to said customer computer and for transmitting ~~real-time~~ updates to said assimilated product information at said customer computer

wherein said updates to said assimilated product information are transmitted to said customer computer from said network host computer by said first computer program if 1) said customer computer has submitted a request to receive said updates to said assimilated product information at said customer computer and 2) said first merchant computer and/or said second merchant computer transmitted updates to said product information in said database at said network host computer in accordance with a request from said customer computer.

2. (Previously Amended) The system of claim 1, wherein said first network connection and said second network connection further comprises:

a network connection between said first merchant computer and a regional host computer;

a network connection between said second merchant computer and said regional host computer; and

a network connection between said regional host computer and said network host computer, wherein said regional host computer receives said product information from said first merchant computer and said second merchant computer and transmits said product information to said network host computer.

3. (Original) The system of claim 1, wherein said customer computer utilizes an information management interface to simplify communication between said customer computer and said network host computer.
4. (Original) The system of claim 1, further comprising a second computer

program, wherein said customer computer utilizes said second computer program to further process said product information.

5. (Previously Amended) The system of claim 1 wherein said first network connection comprises a switch in communication with said first merchant computer and said network host computer, said switch adapted to assimilate said product information from said first merchant computer and to transfer said product information to said network host computer.
6. (Previously Amended) The system of claim 5 wherein said first network connection is a packet switch network, Ethernet, or modem connection.
7. (Previously Amended) The system of claim 1 wherein said second network connection comprises a switch in communication with said second merchant computer and said network host computer, said switch adapted to assimilate said product information from said second merchant computer and to transfer said product information to said network host computer.
8. (Previously Amended) The system of claim 7 wherein said second network connection is a packet switch network, Ethernet, or modem connection.
9. (Previously Amended) The system of claim 1 wherein said first type of network connectivity and said second type of network connectivity are selected from the group of TCP/IP, SNA, or X.25 connectivity.
10. (Cancelled)
11. (Currently Amended) A method for electronic shopping, comprising the steps of:

transmitting product information from a first merchant computer to a network host computer in accordance with a first type of network connectivity;

transmitting product information from a second merchant computer to said network host computer in accordance with a second type of network connectivity;

storing said product information from said first merchant computer and said second merchant computer in a database;

establishing a network connection between a customer computer and a host computer in communication with said database, said customer computer adapted to display information received from said host computer;

receiving at said host computer a request from said customer computer for product information from said database;

assimilating product information from said database in accordance with said request from said customer computer for display in one presentation at said customer computer distinguishing said product information from said first merchant computer from said product information from said second merchant computer;

transmitting from said host computer to said customer computer said assimilated product information;

displaying said assimilated product information at said customer computer;
and

transmitting from said host computer to said customer computer updates to said assimilated product information at said customer computer, wherein said

updates are assimilated by said host computer updating said assimilated product information at said customer computer and transmitted if in response to a request from 1) said customer computer for a real time update of has requested updates to said assimilated product information and with product information from 2) said first merchant computer and or said second merchant computer has transmitted updates to said product information in said database.

12. (Canceled)
13. (Previously Amended) The method of claim 11, wherein said first type of network connectivity and said second type of network connectivity is selected from the group of TCP/IP, SNA, or X.25 connectivity.
14. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein the step of transmitting product information from said first merchant computer comprises the steps of:
 - transmitting said product information from said first merchant computer to a regional host computer; and
 - transmitting said product information from said regional host computer to said network host computer.
15. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein the step of transmitting product information from said second merchant computer comprises the steps of:
 - transmitting said product information from said second merchant computer to a regional host computer; and
 - transmitting said product information from said regional host computer to said network host computer.

16. (Original) The method of claim 11 wherein the step of transmitting product information from a first merchant computer to a network host computer comprises the steps of:

transmitting product information from said first merchant computer to a switch; and

transmitting said product information from said switch to said network host computer.

17. (Original) The method of claim 11 wherein the step of transmitting product information from a second merchant computer to a network host computer comprises the steps of:

transmitting product information from said second merchant computer to a switch; and

transmitting said product information from said switch to said network host computer.

18. (Currently Amended) A method for obtaining real time product information comprising the steps of:

establishing a first network connection between a first merchant computer and a network host computer;

transmitting product information from said first merchant computer to said network host computer;

establishing a second network connection between a second merchant computer and said network host computer;

transmitting product information from said second merchant computer to said network host computer;

storing said product information from said first merchant computer and said second merchant computer in a database;

establishing a connection between said network host computer and a customer computer;

receiving a request for product information from said customer computer;

assimilating product information to distinguish said product information from said first merchant computer from said product information from said second merchant computer in response to said request from said customer computer;

transmitting said assimilated product information to said customer computer;

displaying said assimilated product information at said customer computer;

and

transmitting from said network host computer to said customer computer updates to updating said assimilated product information at said customer computer wherein said updates are assimilated by said network host computer and transmitted if 1) said customer computer has requested updates to assimilated product information and 2) with updated product information from said first merchant computer and or said second merchant computer in response to a request for updated product information from said customer computer has transmitted updates to said product information in said database.

19. (Previously Amended) The method of claim 18 wherein the step of establishing said first network connection and said second network connection comprises the step of establishing said first network connection and said second network connection in accordance with connectivity selected from the group of TCP/IP, SNA, or X.25 connectivity.
20. (Previously Amended) The method of claim 18 wherein the step of establishing said first network connection and said second network connection comprises the step of establishing said first network connection and said second network connection in accordance with a packet switch network, Ethernet, or modem connection.
21. (Currently Amended) A real time shopping system comprising:
 - product information from a plurality of merchant computers;
 - a plurality of network connections between said plurality of merchant computers and a host computer, said network connections for uploading said product information to said host computer;
 - a database at said host computer for storing said product information from said plurality of merchant computers;
 - a computer program at said host computer for assimilating said product information for display in one presentation distinguishing said product information from said first merchant computer from said product information from said second merchant computer;

a connection between said host computer and a customer computer, said connection for transmitting to said customer computer said assimilated product ~~information;~~ information and updates to said assimilated product information, wherein said updates are assimilated by said computer program at said host computer if 1) said customer computer has requested updates to assimilated product information, and 2) obtained from at least one of said plurality of merchant computers has transmitted to said database an update to product information in said database~~in accordance with said plurality of network connections between said plurality of merchant computers and said host computer and a request from said customer computer;~~ and

a display at said customer computer for presenting said assimilated product information and said updates to said assimilated product information.

22. (Previously Amended) The system of claim 21 further comprising a regional host computer, said regional host computer adapted to facilitate said plurality of network connections between said plurality of merchant computers and said host computer.
23. (Original) The system of claim 22 wherein said product information is assimilated at said regional host computer.
24. (Previously Amended) The system of claim 21 further comprising a switch, said switch adapted to facilitate said plurality of network connections between said plurality of merchant computers and said host computer.

25. (Original) The system of claim 24 wherein said product information is assimilated at said switch.
26. (Original) The system of claim 21 further comprising an information management interface to simplify communication between said customer computer and said host computer.